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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, April 18, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "How Farm Women Are Cutting Household Costs." From a radio talk by Miss Florence Hall, Extension Service, U.S.D.A.

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Since most housekeepers these days have the job of running their homes on slim pocketbooks, we're all interested in how the other fellow is doing it and we're all glad to get helpful ideas from others with economy problems like our own. Miss Florence Hall, extension home economist for the Department of Agriculture, who keeps in close touch with homemakers in many different states, gave a talk the other day on this very subject. According to her, women from coast to coast are returning to old-fashioned home arts, are learning to live on what they have and make what they can't buy, as our grandmothers did.

Miss Hall quotes a New England farm woman who said recently, "A day in my life in the year 1933 is like a day in my grandmother's time. My neighbors and I are canning and drying fruits and vegetables. We are canning and curing meats, making butter and cheese, and baking our own bread. We are making over coats and dresses. And we have even revived the art of making soap."

This sort of thing is going on in farm homes all over the country. With farm incomes reduced about sixty per cent since 1928, farm women are making the best possible use of what they have on hand.

How are they doing it? Well, first, they are using their home gardens and orchards. They find this is one of the best ways to save. The average family needs about a hundred and fifty dollars' worth of vegetables and fruits during the year. Often the farm family can produce most of this at home.

A West Virginia woman recently said: "We plan our garden according to directions by the Extension Service to insure a plentiful supply of fresh vegetable and fruits during the summer months, with enough also to can and store so that we may have variety even in the late winter and early spring. This is good health insurance for it helps give our family resistance to colds and other diseases. We have little money to spend these days, but we do set a good table for our own family and for friends who 'happen in' at meal time."

Many farm families did their own butchering this year. Livestock brings a low market price, and is consuming feed. It is wise economy in many cases to transfer meat on the hoof to cans. One woman reports, "Instead of selling meat, I canned roast beef, beef steak, corned beef and meat for soups. This provided the family with twenty-one dollars' worth of meat. We can chickens and pork much the same way, and find that juices from the canned meats make delicious gravies of good flavor and rich brown color."

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Home butchering leaves quantities of surplus fat. Many housewives are using this fat in making soap. In the State of Kansas alone, 5 thousand women cooperated with the Extension Service and produced more than 18 tons of homemade soap last year.

Five years ago, homemade bread was fast disappearing from the American diet. But now bread-making is coming back into the home because of shortage of cash. A Colorado woman who had attended the bread-making demonstrations said, "I am making good bread and rolls now. My family likes them and I am saving about 15 dollars a year."

Cheese making also is being revived. Many farms have a surplus of milk, so old cheese presses are in action once again. An Arkansas woman made 40 pounds of cheese last year, which she valued as being worth 8 dollars on the family food budget.

Farm women everywhere are asking for help in making over clothes, especially coats and dresses. As a result, a new kind of sewing circle, the "clothing clinic" is flourishing. In these clinics, the women remodel their old garments and learn how to give a 1933 appearance to a 1932 dress. In one county in Massachusetts, women saved 600 dollars last fall by making children's winter coats and hats from old material.

You can see that the farm homemaker nowadays is carrying a heavy load. But the men of the family, and the children, too, are helping. More members of the family are at home and all are doing their share in gardening, canning, butchering and home sewing. The men and boys are also helping to beautify home grounds at small cost by the use of native plants and shrubs.

Since money for recreation is scarce, the rule this year is: Family fun at no cost. Books, magazines, games and puzzles are being exchanged, thus doing duty for several families.

The idea of barter is spreading to include service and special talents as well as material things. A Kansas woman recently did a day's sewing in exchange for homemade soap. In one rural community a local girl who had been teaching music in the city had returned home without employment. Her neighbors suggested that she give music lessons to their children, taking her pay in garden stuff. In another community, a landscape artist who was out of work began helping the whole neighborhood make their home surroundings more attractive. Her pay comes in the form of home canned vegetables and meats.

Farm homes are having to cut costs, but at the same time many of them are giving more attention to increasing efficiency and to stopping losses and waste. Their efforts are bringing about better living conditions now, and will provide a firm foundation for more prosperous homes as soon as general economic conditions improve.

By the way, if you want help on planning low-cost menus or on preparing low-cost dishes, or if you want suggestions about making over old clothes, the Bureau of Home Economics has some emergency leaflets to send you. Write either to this station or directly to the Bureau of Home Economics at Washington, D. C.

Tomorrow: "Inexpensive Entertaining for the Youngsters."

